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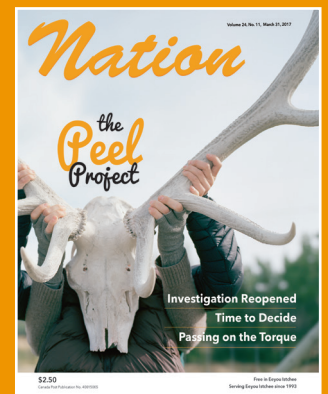


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Norman Hawkins

1946-2017
by Will Nicholls



It was with great sorrow that I learned Norm Hawkins passed away on February 22.

Norm was a man I respected as a straight talker. He never sugarcoated a situation. He never got rich off the Cree people but worked on their behalf because he felt it was the right thing to do.

Norm never sought the spotlight while serving the Cree Nation since 1978. His favourite saying was, "We need to run the numbers." His running the numbers changed the Cree world.

Norm's longtime friend, Cree Nation Government Executive Director Bill Namagoose, remembers him as a mentor and tireless worker. "In 1983 Norm was tasked to come up with a number on how much it would cost to operate all the Cree communities. We needed a number to table with Canada for our budget negotiations to accompany the Cree-Naskapi Act, the first Aboriginal self-government legislation in Canada. He went to all of the Cree communities and ran the numbers for each and in the end he

came up with a number," reminisces Namagoose.

"At that time all the Cree communities had a combined budget of less than \$3 million. He calculated we would need \$11 million plus an escalator or indexation, which became known as the 'Norm Hawkins Formula'. It was more than triple of our total budgets."

Some of the Cree Chiefs were incredulous and asked Norm what he had been smoking and said the governments will never agree to that amount. But Norm was proved right, said Namagoose, when "that number of \$11 million and the Norm Hawkins Formula became part of the Cree-Naskapi Act funding package for the Crees."

The Norm Hawkins Formula now brings in annually \$98 million to the Cree communities. It is a fitting legacy for a man about whom most Cree know almost nothing.

It wasn't only individual communities that Norm had a hand in helping. Namagoose credits him with helping found both Air Creebec and the

Cree Construction Company. "Norm gave us advice on how to manage and invest our compensation funds," said Namagoose.

Namagoose said Norm was part of most of the negotiations that he led on major agreements. During breaks in the talks "[Norm] would give his analysis on what had just transpired and he was usually right. We would change tactics or be more aggressive. And most of the time, we ended up with groundbreaking agreements that propelled the Cree Nation."

When informed of Norm's passing, Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come said, "We will miss him. Not only has Norm contributed to the great success of our Nation, but he was a wonderful friend."

Namagoose also spoke at Norm's funeral. "To his family I say, thank you for sharing Norm, thank you for sharing your husband, your dad, thank you for sharing your grandfather with the Cree Nation. We will be forever grateful."

He will be missed.



Acting on activism

by Jamie Pashagumskum

Shawn Iserhoff talks sustainability at European environmental conference

Photos provided by Shawn Iserhoff & The European Environment Foundation

Mistissini band councillor Shawn Iserhoff recently returned from a conference of environmental activists in Germany with an increased sense of enthusiasm towards environmental issues.

Iserhoff attended the 6th International Convention of Environmental Laureates in Freiburg, Germany, March 9-12. The conference is a networking platform for environmental advocates from around the world. To be invited as an environmental laureate, a person or group must be the recipients of an award for work in the field of environmental preservation.

Iserhoff was asked to attend because of his work with the Mistissini youth council and their opposition cam-

paign against uranium mining that took off in 2012.

"It was the youth of Mistissini who initiated the fight against uranium in Eeyou Istchee," Iserhoff recalled. "We basically got the ball rolling in terms of the opposition and after that came the support from the Cree Nation of Mistissini and the Grand Council at the Annual General Assembly back in 2012."

In 2015, the youth of Mistissini received the Nuclear-Free Future Award by the Nuclear-Free Future Award Foundation (NFFAF) based in Munich, Germany in recognition of their anti-uranium movement.

The winners of such awards are often invited to attend the conference to talk about their environmental cam-

paigns, make contacts and exchange ideas.

Iserhoff met with another youth group from Africa fighting a similar battle against uranium mining. He said discussions with the group led to plans for future alliances.

The conference also hosted presentations and a young talents day. The young talents day showcased the UWC Robert Borsch College in Freiburg, a boarding school for students from around the world that is renowned for its education curriculum with an emphasis on environmental issues.

Iserhoff said that it was an honour to represent the Cree nation at such a prestigious and inspiring event. "It's a very humbling experience seeing the amount of work that is being done



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globally in terms of environmental issues,” Iserhoff said.

One project that impressed him was the construction of a village entirely powered by renewable energy such as solar panels and wind power. Another inspiring story was a project in India that teaches elderly women to construct solar panels.

“It was one of the highlights of my life to be able to experience this and to come together with people who’ve done tremendous work with relation to environmental issues,” Iserhoff said.

Iserhoff noted that youth mobilization over issues like the uranium battle leads to other opportunities to meet and learn from other activists.

“With the NFF award that we won in 2015, that just goes to show how much the Cree youth are being recognized.”



“It was one of the highlights of my life to be able to experience this and to come together with people who’ve done tremendous work with relation to environmental issues”



Demanding justice

CBC assists Cree family’s search for answers in death of young mother

by Dan Isaac

Rose-Ann Blackned was 24 and a mother of two when her frozen body was found November 16, 1991, in Val-d’Or. She had been missing for nine days. Her family has always claimed her death was not thoroughly investigated by police. This March, the case was finally re-opened.

The CBC reported that Blackned’s death was the result of an altercation that occurred after the closing of a local bar. “Even though the injuries were not deadly, they contributed to weaken the victim, who died of hypothermia,” said Daniel Huard, then a detective with the municipal police force in Val-d’Or (which was replaced by the Sûreté du Québec in 2002).

“[They] beat her and abandoned her,” Huard told the CBC.

And while the investigating officer recommended manslaughter charges against the two individuals believed to be responsible for the beating, no charges were ever filed.

“When I found out they were reopening the case I felt very overwhelmed with mixed emotions,” said Rose-Ann’s sister, Mary-Ann Blackned.

“I was angry because of how she died. Being beaten and abandoned and left in the cold all by herself. But I was also relieved that they decided to reopen the case because something was not right with the first investigation.”

Mary-Ann cited the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) as the inspiration to renew her search for answers. “I saw it as an opportunity for me and my family to finally find out what happened to our sister,” said Mary-Ann.

But the slow pace of the provincial and federal government efforts to launch the inquiry led the family to reach out to the CBC. “I contacted them and told them the story of my late sister and gave them as much infor-

mation as we could and they started digging. That’s when the SQ decided to reopen the case,” said Mary-Ann. “They pushed the SQ to do their job right.”

The family will be participants in the upcoming hearings of the National Inquiry this spring. They’re also encouraging families with similar experiences to reach out to the CBC and the MMIWG Inquiry.

And while the reopening of the case provides some solace to the family, it also brings old wounds to the surface. “In the past I turned to alcohol and drugs to avoid dealing with these kinds of emotions. But lately I’m learning not to turn to alcohol by feeling what’s in my heart. So that I can heal in my grief,” said Mary-Ann.

“I want to encourage people who are dealing with situations like this to feel it – to really feel it. Cry, get mad, scream, all of that. It helps you get stronger on the inside.”



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Senator Beyak schooled on residential schools

Conservative Senator Lynn Beyak made headlines across the country in early March by expressing her disappointment that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission didn't recognize the "good deeds" accomplished by the "well-intentioned" religious teachers who worked in residential schools.

Some, such as NDP MP Romeo Saganash, called for her resignation, comparing her statements to saying that the Holocaust was okay. The Anglican Church, which was a major operator of residential schools across Canada, also issued a statement saying,

"There was nothing good about the residential school system."

Beyak was appointed to the Senate by former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper. However, current Conservative Party leader Rona Ambrose responded to *the Nation* by disowning Beyak's remarks. "Please be assured that the remarks in question do not reflect the Conservative Party's views," said Ambrose. "These comments were disturbing and hurtful to the many survivors who suffered the devastating effects of the residential school system."

Beyak has continued to defend her remarks, stating that she has several Indigenous friends and has received just as much positive feedback as negative over the remarks. She also cited the headlines as "fake news," as what she was really trying to do was draw attention to problems such as clean drinking water, inadequate housing and prison rates for Aboriginals when she made the speech.

Beyak has since agreed to meet with residential school survivors but is not backing away from her remarks.



Senator Beyak



Race relations commission deadline set for April 13

Following more than a year of turmoil over abuse allegations, investigations into police and reports of racial bias in Val-d'Or, the Quebec government is following through on its promise to create a provincial commission.

The Commission d'enquête sur les relations entre les Autochtones et certains services publics au Québec: écoute, réconciliation et progrès" (CERP) was created on December 21, 2016, and is chaired by Jacques Viens. It was created in response to the demands of the Cree Nation Government and the

Association of First Nations in Quebec and Labrador.

In order to be a participant or contributor to the commission you need to submit a written request by April 13. The first audiences will be held April 27 and 28 and will be open to the public.

A confidential hotline with voicemail was set up on March 20 and is available for those who wish to share any information that can contribute to the commission at 1-844-580-0113. For more information on how to participate or contribute you can visit the CERP website at www.cerp.gouv.qc.ca

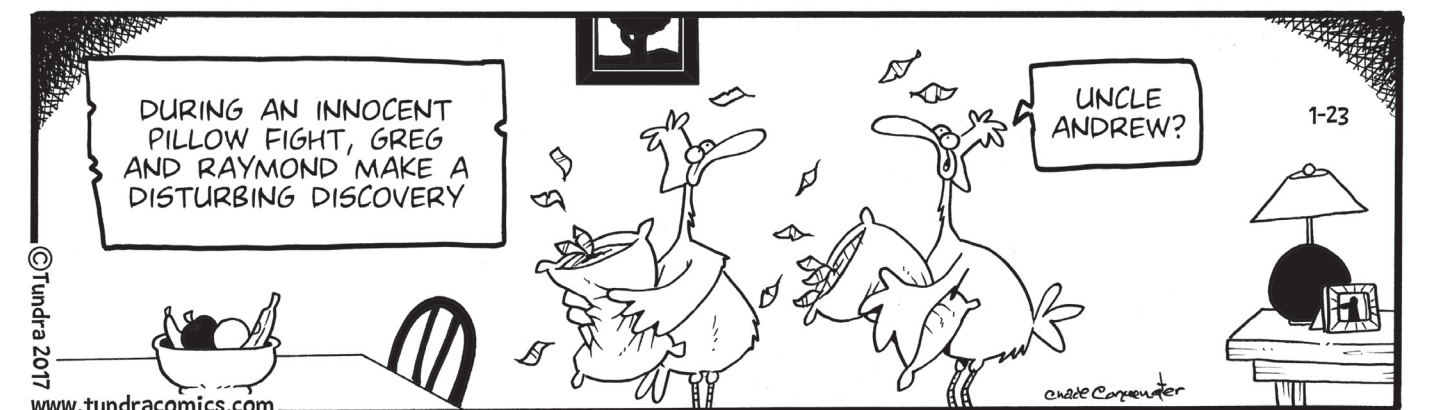


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Elder Harry Scipio speaking at the CNG's community consultation in Chisasibi

*If you feed the people the proper information they will always make the **right decision** in the end* ”

Decisiontime

Consultation sessions end on **proposed constitution**

by Jamie Pashagumskum | Photos by Brian Stewart

O kay Cree Nation, the ball is now in your court. With the community consultations wrapping up, the responsibility is with the members of each Cree community to decide whether to endorse the proposed Cree constitution.

For the past three months the Cree Nation Government (CNG) has been going from community to community in an effort to inform the public about the proposed governance agreement and constitution.

The consultations are a requirement of the approval process. For the constitution to be ratified, it must first be accepted and approved by all the Cree communities by way of a band resolution.

In addition to all Cree communities on the Quebec side – a resolution from MoCreebec is not a requirement of the approval process – representatives of the CNG have also met with entities, such as the Board of Compensation, the Cree School Board and the Cree Health Board, and Cree post-secondary stu-

dents in Montreal and Ottawa to answer questions and address concerns.

According to Bill Namagoose, executive director of the Grand Council, the draft constitution and agreement were for the most part well received by the Cree population. Of the over 1000 people who they consulted, Namagoose said there was no real opposition to the agreement – just a lot of tough questions.

Deputy Grand Chief Rodney Mark also had the impression that the public is in favour of the proposed governance agreement, but he did notice some anxiety.

Those who attended the consultations “were apprehensive in that they had to think about it,” he said.

The Deputy Grand Chief then went on to explain that this is a natural reaction for people because in a lot of cases the public may not be as informed on such matters as the chiefs and community councils members might be.

Namagoose agreed, adding that those in the negotiating process are



Taapwaauchaayimiisu Believe In Yourself

OUR PROGRAM

Taapwaauyimiisu (Believe in yourself) program is a resource available for the schools in the three Cree communities, where the pilot project is currently being launched. We offer support to the students' ages 12 to 17 years old who, for various reasons, are temporarily suspended from 3 to 5 days from school.

The expression **"Believe in yourself"** is dear to our program as we want to send a strong message of empowerment and self-worth to our youth.

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Taapwaauchaayimiisu program in Mistissini has officially moved in their new service site at the Family Resource Centre (Old Youth Centre). Thank you, Cree Nation of Mistissini, for your collaboration in providing space for our youth.

We would also like to thank everyone that attended our open houses in Waskaganish and Chisasibi.

Should you require more information, please contact the coordinator.

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Deputy Grand Chief Rodney Mark also had the impression that the public is in favour of the proposed governance agreement, but he did notice some anxiety

more informed on the issues because they "live it every day." He also stressed the importance of having a better-informed public.

"If you feed the people the proper information they will always make the right decision in the end," he said.

Chisasibi Chief Davey Bobbish thought that those who attended the Chisasibi consultation February 7 were largely in favour of adopting the new agreement. But he also noted that some people did have concerns.

Bobbish said that the main topic of discussion was taxation. Many of those

commenting were afraid that, with the new governance agreement, the Cree people would now be taxed.

Many of those fears diminished when it was explained to them that taxation will probably never happen and a lot of people at the consultation were surprised to learn that the Cree communities have had the power of taxation since the Cree-Naskapi Act was implemented in 1984.

Bobbish pointed out that if it were ever to come to this, the decision to tax would come from the lead-

ers through consultation with the people.

"For any one leader to decide (to tax), that would never happen," he said. "We have the ability to tax but it's never going to be applied."

This was also a notion shared by Namagoose. "There was no obligation in the agreement to use (the power of taxation) and there will be no consequences to Cree funding if the CNG doesn't exercise that taxation power," he said.

Another concern is how the new agreement would affect services that are currently in place. Namagoose

says that the new agreement would only change the way local governments are managed.

"[The Cree people] will continue to receive all the normal programs that Canadian citizens are entitled to," Namagoose said. "The only difference will be that the Minister of Northern Affairs will no longer be in the picture in terms of Cree governance, and the financial accountability will now be to the Cree people, rather than to the government of Canada."

Namagoose also noted that there would be no

change to the Cree services such as the school board, the health board and the Eeyou Eenuu Police Force.

Other people worried whether the constitution would hand over legislative power to the CNG at the expense of local band councils.

Namagoose denied this would happen. He stressed that communities should be working with the CNG and not view it as a hindrance. "Our unity has been our greatest strength. We propelled our nation to greater heights because of unity," Namagoose said.



This was a view also held by the Deputy Grand Chief.

"The people who sit on the CNG are the chiefs," Mark said. "The Grand Chief doesn't have unilateral decision-making power. Having a Cree Nation Government that is strong is a good thing in terms of dealing with industries such as mining, forestry, hydro and tourism."

In all, most of those consulted were optimistic about the new governance agreement and envisioned good things for the future of the Cree nation.

Mark was also excited about the possibilities of self-governance and called it a great opportunity for community planning. "It's unprecedented that we can sit down and really plan for

the next 10 to 15 years. In terms of land-use planning, in terms of community planning, in terms of economic development planning, this is huge!"

Support for the new self-governance model has already begun. In a community meeting March 16, the people of Wemindji passed a community resolution backing the proposed constitution. Although a band resolution is

all that is required, Wemindji members took the process one step further.

Chief Bobbish applauds the initiative and says he is planning to table a recommendation at the next council meeting in Chisasibi to put forward a resolution adopting the proposed agreement.

Once all the Cree communities agree to the new agreement, it must go to the federal

government cabinet for final approval. Mark estimates that that process could take up to two years. In the meantime, he added, communities should begin preparing their respective planning processes.

While the date has not yet been determined, the final community consultation will be held in Moose Factory with the MoCreebec Eeyoud.

Once all the Cree communities agree to the new agreement, it must go to the federal government cabinet for **final approval.**

Public Notice

Société de développement de la Baie-James

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Eligible contractors must have an establishment in the Baie-James territory.

The registration form can be downloaded from the SDBJ Web site, at www.sdbj.gouv.qc.ca.

Registration fee: \$50 non-refundable (taxes included)

For more information, please contact Chantal Brassard at 819 739-4717, ext. 1264

Registration period: ongoing

Avis public

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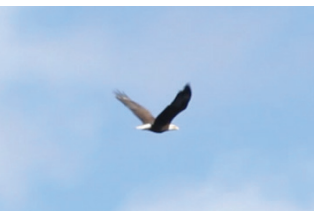
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Bird of prey



Nest

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Next show:
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www.creejustice.ca

The 2017 snowmobile-racing season closed out on a high note in late March with the running of the Ouje-Bougoumou Snowmobile Challenge.

Featuring cross-country races in four categories – Pro, Sport, Women's and Beginners – the Ouje-Bougoumou Snowmobile Challenge brings together racers from across Eeyou Istchee for some of the most gruelling sledding of the season.

One young sledder continued his strong racing debut in Ouje-Bougoumou. Trevor Bosum, a 15-year-old from Chibougamau, produced a solid third-place finish in Beginners Cross-Country Championship before turning the heads of both racers and fans alike by following up with an eighth-place in a field of 17 in the Sport Cross-Country Championship.

Success at the Ouje-Bougoumou Snowmobile Challenge is just the latest in a series of breakthroughs this season for the 15-year-old high school student from Chibougamau.

Trevor opened his debut season in early March at the Mistissini Snowmobile Challenge by placing second in the Beginners Cross-Country Championship race, and overcame mechanical difficulties at the starting line to take home fourth place in the Junior Boys Cross-Country event at the Chisasibi Snowmobile Challenge the following weekend.

While Trevor's success on the racing circuit appears to have come almost overnight, it actually represents a decade of training alongside his father, Reggie Bosum.

An officer with the Eeyou Eenou Police Force, Reggie has a passion for snowmobiling rooted in two decades of competitive racing.

"I started riding around the age of 13," recalled Reggie in conversation with *the Nation*. "I would ride my brother's skidoo around the community, but started breaking them when I would push it."

“But my brother, Curtis, really encouraged me and when my Dad gave me the chance to compete in my first race, I took it and I won. I was 14 at the time,” Reggie said with a laugh.

That changed everything for Reggie, who quickly graduated to larger 800cc sleds and hit the trail every chance he had. An early innovator of sno-cross racing in Eeyou Istchee, Reggie eventually claimed victory at the 2001 Festival Folifrets Baie-James in Chibougamau, despite competing on a fractured ankle.

Reggie made the change to cross-country following that triumph, which he says forced him to make dramatic changes to the way he prepared for races.

"In cross country, it is a long race, so you have to prepare yourself both physically and mentally," explained Reggie. "You and your sled must form a bond. If you don't push hard enough, you won't have



PASSING OF THE TORQUE

Reggie and Trevor Bosum make snowmobile racing a **family affair**

by Dan Coyle
Photos provided by Reggie Bosum

Mohawk Girls

Indigenous series
recognized as one of the
best in Canada

By Dan Isaac

Photos provided by Rezolution Pictures

Rezolution Pictures' television series *Mohawk Girls* was nominated for three awards at 2017 Canadian Screen Awards, one shy of their record four nominations, set in 2016. The nominations didn't turn into Canadian Screen Award statues at the March 12 nationally televised gala. But being recognized for the second straight year alongside Canada's best was an honour in itself, said Brittany LeBorgne, a Kahnawake Mohawk who plays the character Zoe on the show.

"It's a Native show, on a Native network, about Native people, and it was recognized as one of the top five comedy shows in Canada," said LeBorgne. "We're telling our own stories and that's important on so many levels."

And while *Mohawk Girls* was the only Indigenous television series nominated for best show in its category, Indigenous actors and projects were recognized throughout. Eric Schweig was nominated for Best Actor in a



*"It's a Native show, on a Native network, about Native people, and it was recognized as one of the **top five comedy** shows in Canada"*

- Brittany LeBorgne



Dramatic Series, *The Pass System* was nominated for Best Editing in a Documentary, and Julian Black Antelope was nominated for Best Guest Role in a Dramatic Series. And a feature film called *Maliglutit*, set in 1913 Nunavut and centred on an Inuit caribou hunter, was nominated for Best Picture alongside *Race*, the Jesse Owens biopic.

"We were nominated alongside *Kim's Convenience*," said LeBorgne. "To have two of the five shows in the comedy category focused on minorities is telling of how things are changing."

The show's nominations were for Best Direction in a Comedy Series (Tracey Deer), Best Writing in Comedy Series (Cynthia Knight), and Best Comedy Series. The trophy for Best Comedy Series went to a new series, *Letterkenny*, which was the big winner in the TV comedy category.

"The only award *Letterkenny* didn't win was for Best Actor and Actress. Best Actress went to Catherine O'Hara from *Schitt's Creek*," said LeBorgne, who was nominated in the category the year

The show's nominations were for Best Direction in a Comedy Series (Tracey Deer), Best Writing in Comedy Series (Cynthia Knight), and Best Comedy Series.

"I still consider myself a **beginner** in this industry, even though we're about to start filming season 5"





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“But the nominations say something too, they say our stories as **Indigenous people matter** and our stories as Indigenous people are important”



prior. “She won the award last year too.”

“I still consider myself a beginner in this industry, even though we’re about to start filming Season 5,” LaBorgne told *The Nation*. “At the cocktail party before the event, I’m always like, who am I going to see this year? I’ve always been a huge Christopher Plummer fan because of *The Sound of Music*. So, I was just like, ‘I can’t believe he’s standing next to me.’”

But the real award for the cast, crew and producers is having a blast doing what they love.

“I’m so proud of our show, and of Tracey and Cynthia, and of all the girls. We have such a great time every year and we’ve really become a family. To be recognized as one of the best when we’re having so much fun, is the icing on the cake,” said LaBorgne. “But the nominations say something too. They say our stories as Indigenous people matter and our stories as Indigenous people are important.”


An aerial photograph showing a wide, muddy river meandering through a dense forest. The trees are in various stages of autumn, with some showing bright yellow and orange foliage, while others remain dark green. The river's path is irregular, with several small islands and tributaries visible. The overall scene is a vast, natural landscape.

Uncharted Territory

The Peel Project takes on the Yukon Wilderness

by Nigel Irwin | Photos by Callan Field | www.callanfield.com

As Canada approaches its 150th birthday, it seems fitting that we all take a moment to reflect on our country and what it means to be Canadian. We all know what a Canadian is supposed to be: Timmies-drinking, hockey-loving, outdoorsy, polite. These traits are describing little more than a stereotype. In reality, the Canadian identity has always been a bit unsure of itself.

An aerial photograph showing a steep, forested mountain slope on the left, with a river valley below. The forest is dense with green and yellow trees. The river valley is a mix of grey and brown, showing the river and surrounding terrain. The text is overlaid on a dark circular background in the upper left corner.

The Peel
Watershed
in Yukon, nearly
68,000km² of
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The **fresh, young faces** at the beginning of the film are nowhere to be seen at journey's end; instead we see Canadians with a newfound appreciation for the **relentless beauty** that Canada's natural spaces has to offer.

What is Canada if not a beautiful, sprawling, land-mass? For an example, look at the Peel Watershed in Yukon, nearly 68,000km² of untouched wilderness. The Peel is one of the last undeveloped watersheds left in this country and is one of the largest non-road-ed natural areas on earth, seven times larger than Yellowstone. Connection to the land has, and always will be, the quickest way to feel Canadian, and yet for many, spaces like these are not seen in person, only through postcards and nature documentaries.

For some, connection to the land is inherent. It was present when they were born, and it was there for their ancestors and hopefully will be there for future generations. For others, including indigenous and non-indigenous alike, that connection has been lost, thanks to the concrete landscape laid down by colonization. In response to this disconnect, six artists recently took part in The Peel Project, which saw them canoe 20 days to the very ends of the Peel Watershed to try and discover what makes them Canadian. A documentary film on their travels is premiering in Toronto at the end of March, and will be shown across the country, as a means to show audiences what they discovered.

According to the project site, The Peel is a "multi-layered project bringing together film, the arts and sciences as a means of telling a uniquely Canadian story of art, adventure and Canadian identity."

The six artists in the film come from Canadian city centres like Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. Seeing them bring their different artistic practices, including photography, glass blowing, and poetry, from the dense metropolis to the vast Canadian wilderness is enthralling. The fresh, young faces at the beginning of the film are nowhere to be seen at journey's end; instead we see Canadians with a newfound appreciation for the relentless beauty that Canada's natural spaces have to offer. The artists are challenged physically and emotionally, and speak candidly to the camera about their insecurities. If it is not clear why they would subject themselves to the burden of portaging through arctic wilderness, consider that the Peel Watershed, as it is now, may not be there for much longer.

Members of the Peel Project pictured right (Top to bottom):
Callan Field, Anthony Wallace, Carleigh Baker, Katie Green

At the point of breaking, when the artists are wet, hungry, and exhausted on the 18th day, they themselves are discovered by a Tetlit Gwich'in family, who takes them in and rejuvenates them.

In the summer of 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada announced its decision to hear an appeal to reject the land use plan set out by the Yukon Government in regards to the Peel Watershed. The Yukon Land Use Planning Council is meant to coordinate with the Government, Regional Planning Commissions, and Yukon First Nations, to ensure development of land happens in a fair and harmonious way. According to the Peel Watershed Planning Commission website, the Government of Yukon manages over 97% of the land,

which is seen as Crown land. The rest is managed by four First Nation governments from the Yukon and Northwest Territories, the Na-ho Nyak Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Vuntut Gwitchin and Tetlit Gwich'in. The Peel Watershed has deposits of many useful resources, including gas, oil, coal, and uranium, and if the Yukon government has their way, 71 percent of the land would be gutted for economic development through oil and mining exploration. Once again, we have the classic standoff between resource-hungry companies trying to

cut out indigenous populations. It was originally recommended, in the Peel Watershed Land Use Plan, that 80 percent of the land be restricted and preserved. This plan was endorsed by First Nations and a majority of Yukon people, but was ultimately rejected by the Yukon Government in favor of a new plan which would see 71 percent of land used for resources. This decision was the catalyst for the lawsuit which is now being recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Peel Watershed Planning Commission claims that the area is

unpopulated, but as we follow The Peel Project artists into the wild, we discover that this is entirely untrue. At the point of breaking, on the 18th day, when the artists are wet, hungry, and exhausted, they themselves are discovered by a Tetlit Gwich'in family, who takes them in and rejuvenates them. The irony is not lost on the six, non-indigenous "explorers" that history has repeated itself. The land has gotten the better of the settlers, and the Indians are their saving grace.

The purpose of The Peel Project was for the artists to discover themselves, instead what the film discovers is a pristine landscape, stewarded by people who need help protecting it. The film doesn't tell you this message, it shows it to you, through striking footage of the Peel Watershed and the journey to it. It allows the viewer to come to the conclusion themselves that what makes us Canadian is not our beer, our coffee, or our sports, it's the land we live on, and our duty to protect it.





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Under the Northern Sky Sick and tired

by Xavier Kataquapit



Today was the first day of spring and up north we are happy that the end of very cold weather has finally arrived. It has been a strange winter with very cold spells and temperatures of -30° Celsius while we have also been experiencing periods of warm weather and rain. Our weather in northern Ontario has been all over the place.

I have seen a lot of sickness this winter also. I had a really bad cold for a couple of weeks and then managed to get a Norovirus. Neither one of these maladies was welcome, but the most terrible one was the Norovirus. It really knocked the heck out of me. It comes on like gangbusters as one minute I was feeling good then suddenly I got a pain in my stomach, which rapidly grew to extreme vomiting and diarrhea. It lasted for a few days and I had to really pay attention to make sure to replenish the water and electrolytes I had lost. Dehydration can become very dangerous. So if you do get this type of stomach virus make sure to buy some electrolyte powder at the drugstore and drink it with water so you do not get dangerously dehydrated.

Many members of my family and friends have been sick this winter and I have always noticed that people in isolated First Nations like Attawapiskat tend to pick up contagious sickness very quickly as remote communities are social and disease travels quickly. I noticed that with the changing weather patterns and such up-and-down temperatures, people may be getting sick more often. Most people I know up north do not have access to a regular family doctor so they end up in emergency rooms and see a temporary doctor. The emergency rooms are often very busy and full of people with all kinds of sickness and injury.

The truth is that if you weren't very sick before you got to the emergency room you just might end up with some malady contracted while you visited the hospital.

Although our Canadian health system is still in place and for the most part servicing most of us well, it has a lot to be desired. Governments have been starving the system for many years and private healthcare is threatening the public system more and more every year. I don't understand why we can't take our healthcare system more seriously and dedicate as much money as we need to and make sure the system is working as it should. As a social democracy I would like to see Canada devote more money to healthcare, public education, including college and university, and senior citizens.

We have spent billions fighting wars in faraway counties for more than a decade and causing a lot of death and destruction. Most of this was because of big business interest in oil and other natural resources in those countries and nothing positive came out of any of these conflicts. In fact, our actions have galvanized people to become terrorists and the world has become a more dangerous place. The money we have spent on needless wars would have been much better served with expenditures on health, education and our senior citizens.

We should all take stock of our local hospitals and medical facilities and services and work to lobby the government to increase funding to return the system to something closer to its original ideal. We need to train more doctors and nurses and to make their work environments easier to deal with. We need to take the strain off the system and expand it where the needs are.

Medical care in many remote First Nations is often poor and in some almost non-existent as there are no doctors in place on a full-time basis. Under the current Liberal government things are supposedly getting better, but they could improve a lot more. Too many people are left aside, resulting in death and poor quality of life simply because our healthcare system is not working as well as it should be. Money is not the only answer but it is the most obvious at this point. We need less lobbying and services from the private sector and more reliable and enhanced coverage from our once well-respected public system. Canadians are getting sick waiting for real action in this area as we continue to slip into a private system like the one in the United States. None of us really wants to end up with a mess like that.



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